

Re-defining Antisemitism and Israel

by Gary Fouse



On numerous occasions, I have checked into a blog called, "*Informed Comment*" by University of Michigan professor Juan Cole. For those readers not familiar with Cole, he is one of the virtual army of leftist professors who are activists in the campaign against Israel. It is Cole's position that Israel is oppressing the Palestinians, denying their rights, occupying their land, and, in general, (Israelis) have no right to even be there in the first place. In the past, I have posted many of Cole's articles in *Informed Comment* accompanied by critiques.

Currently, he is running a [guest article](#) by three writers who attack the working definition of antisemitism as defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), a definition that has gained wide recognition internationally. The writers are Jasmin Zine, Greg Bird and Sara Matthews, who are professors at Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada. It is

their position that the IHRA definition is an assault upon free speech-namely the right to criticize the state of Israel and its policies vis-a-vis the Palestinians. They point out that there are 7 aspects of the definition that relate to the state of Israel. In other words, it is their position that the IHRA definition considers (any) criticism of Israel to be antisemitic. They are particularly upset that the government of Ontario has chosen to adopt the IHRA definition.

[Here](#) is the IHRA definition of antisemitism from their web site. I have cut and pasted one pertinent paragraph.

“Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.”

Note that the definition itself states that *“criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic”*. That is fair, and virtually every pro-Israel activist I know acknowledges that. However, when Israel’s enemies attack her for this or that perceived human rights abuse against Palestinians while ignoring the practices of virtually all of her neighbors, there is obvious hypocrisy. In addition, is it unreasonable to include points such as calling Israel a Nazi state or holding Jews everywhere responsible for what Israel does? The US State Department definition of antisemitism has similar wording in regards to Israel, and it has also come under attack as being an assault against free speech. Critics charge that the DOS definition categorizes all criticism of Israel as antisemitic-which is false. I have personally heard professors speak at UC Irvine and make this false claim.

More to the point-and from my own observations- I believe that the attacks on Israel are largely over religion as opposed to who is entitled to what land. All too often, I have seen how attacks on Israel by pro-Palestinian forces, especially on campuses, have crossed the line into pure Jew-hatred. Why is it that virtually the entire Islamic world has joined forces against Israel on this issue? (Granted, some Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt, Sudan, the UAE and others have decided to give up the fight.) But on university campuses across North America, Muslim students from backgrounds as diverse as Afghan, Pakistani, Arabs etc. have all embraced the Palestinian cause. That is hardly a coincidence. Islamic teaching stresses that land occupied at any time by Muslims is to be Muslim land forever. Thus, in any conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims, Muslims everywhere must support the Muslim cause.

The point I am trying to make here is that when discussing Jew-hatred, antisemitism, or whatever you want to call it, we cannot ignore the fact that the Koran and Islamic teaching are downright, well, antisemitic (and anti-Christian). This is not to ignore or excuse Jew-hatred by many other factions, including white nationalists, neo-Nazis, KKK-types, and others. Indeed, antisemitism has taken so many forms over the centuries. Originally, it was based on theology and the accusation that the Jews crucified Christ. The antisemitism of Martin Luther was based on theological differences. Later it evolved into other forms involving old tropes; money-changers, bankers, the Jews control everything, etc. Over one hundred years ago there was the Czarist Russian-created *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*-a pure forgery, that some fanatics still accept as fact. Then came the Nazis, who cared nothing about theology. To them, Jews were a race-which was inferior and a threat that had to be removed from Germany and Europe.

Today, so much of the Jew-hatred we see today is centered around the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Is it any wonder why

the IHRA definition of antisemitism mentions Israel? It should also be stressed that so many of Israel's attackers resort to classic anti-Jew tropes, such as harvesting blood, dual loyalties, controlling everything from the banks, to Hollywood, to our government, and the world itself. Today, Israel is accused of harvesting the organs of dead Palestinians to sell on the world market. That canard comes from the pro-Palestinian lobby. (Maybe I should not use that word, "lobby" because it is still a dirty word used against Jews in America who support the Jewish state of Israel.)

I would also like to address this statement from the article:

"Websites run by neoconservative campus groups demonize, harass and intimidate scholars who support Palestinian rights, [support BDS](#) and are [critical of Israel's policies](#). These targeted attacks have a [chilling effect](#) on classrooms, research and [campus politics](#)."

So while complaining about their right of free speech being attacked, they attack the free speech of their critics (like me). Yes, websites like mine certainly criticize them, but how do we harass and intimidate? It is clear that to them, criticism is harassment and intimidation. "Scholars" are free to attack Israel until the cows come home, which they do on a regular basis on US, Canadian, and European campuses. In fact, it is their side which rules the roost. But let any pro-Israel speaker come to campus, and they can expect to be disrupted. Jewish students who stand up for Israel are routinely harassed and intimidated by pro-Palestinian students, faculty, and other radicals who show up to speak on campus. I have seen it first-hand. I have been present at pro-Israel events at UC Irvine that are disrupted while campus cops stand around like potted plants, and cowardly university administrators hide under their desks. It is not the pro-Israel side that engages in disruption and bullying; it is the pro-Palestinian side, as represented by Students for Justice in Palestine and various chapters of the Muslim Student Association/Union. To say that

our campuses are a hostile environment to anybody who defends Israel is an understatement. Every year, student governments all over the US and Canada have to spend hours or days heatedly debating boycott resolutions against Israel. Often they are accompanied by swastikas, such as [occurred](#) at UC Davis in 2015, just to name one example.

Then there is the above-referenced BDS movement (Boycott, Divest and Sanctions) directed against one nation in the world-Israel. It is a creation of the Palestinian forces and seeks to destroy the Jewish state of Israel. Twice I have been present when BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti has spoken on California campuses (UC Irvine and UC Riverside). He is a fraud masquerading as a human rights activist, but he is welcomed with open arms by leftists everywhere.

Contrary to the claims of the three authors of this article, Israel is the sole nation in that region under attack precisely because it is a Jewish state in a sea of Muslim states. Were Israel just another majority-Muslim dictatorship or theocracy, nobody would be complaining about so-called human rights abuses. That is why certain-not all- references to Israel can and must be defined as antisemitic. Those who seek to bring about the destruction of the Jewish state of Israel, while engaging in tactics of disruption and intimidation against Jewish students in the West do not get to define what antisemitism is.